

## **Comprehensive soil testing reaps benefits**

Brad and Evan Schmidt milk approximately 600 cows at Mundulla in the States South East averaging around 7300 l/Cow. They have a 220 ha milking area and a total of 400 ha farmed, 126 ha is irrigated by centre pivot and flood irrigation. Brad and Evan joined the Dairy Soil Nutrients project through the Upper South East group and have found the project exceeded their expectations, providing a valuable insight into their farm.

“The project provided us with the first comprehensive program of soil testing undertaken on our farm,” said Evan. “In the past we had tested a few paddocks annually on a rotation around the farm but with only 2 or 3 paddocks you never see the full picture. The project results clearly show us where to focus our fertiliser effort.”

It wasn't all easy though, “When we got the initial soil test results from the labs it took a lot of effort to interpret the results, the numbers can easily confuse you, said Evan. “When we got the farm information booklet from the project including the maps showing the results and interpretation they showed the fertility patterns clearly”.

“The farm maps were the key to understanding the whole of the property. Clearly it is not always the case that paddocks that appear similar in soil type and management are similar in fertility. Particularly our centre pivots show differences in Olsen P levels that we didn't think would be the case.”

Normally our fertiliser program is pretty simple, we would have applied a basic application of DAP, and have also used some biological products, chicken manure and our dairy effluent, now we will be able to better direct these fertiliser applications.

We will now be using our Agronomist to fully review our fertiliser plan utilising the additional soil fertility information. We are committed to making the change as we will get better results from our fertiliser program.

The project gives us a complete reference point for the future fertiliser decisions, we can target the needs of the milking area and understand how it differs from the needs of our renovation areas or our hay and silage paddocks.